

## **Tenant Engagement Strategy `Sustain to Sustainability` 2024/25**

### **1. Background**

Sustain (UK) Ltd believes very strongly that its tenants (and any other service users) should have the widest possible say in the services they receive, on the basis of the service reflecting their needs and aspirations and providing a safe living environment. Sustain recognises that sometime current funding prohibits certain levels of aspiration requirements and in these cases, they will endeavour to identify sources of funding and/or other agencies that can provide the additional aspirational support/care.

Sustain has absorbed the RSH Tenant Involvement & Empowerment Strategy and is adopting the Consumer Standards – The C Standards, and believe that its own strategy reflects the RSH requirements at present in a practical and full deliverable manner.

Sustain has a long history of consulting with tenants and encouraging their involvement, eg: -

- Initial consideration of and consultation with existing tenancies in the shared accommodation, so as to ensure that any proposed new tenancy is `most likely to fit in`.
- Enabling new tenants to temporarily stay in their new accommodation for an initial 28-day period so as to identify that they feel safe/supported etc in this environment.
- Each new tenant is provided with a `Welcome Pack` which explains what accommodation and support service is offered, relevant and simple `Do's and Don'ts` regarding their tenancy (ie in addition a to a full tenancy agreement provided) and important aspects concerning H&S, Safeguarding, relevant Policies & Procedures and details as to how to raise a complaint.
- Each tenant is encouraged in the co-production of a support plan, which is intended to deliver aspirational levels of support to ensure that they

can look forward to a future arrangement where they are able to make their own sustainable lifestyle choices and live in their chosen community in a manner that is both supportive of and respected by the community.

- In addition to daily contact with their House Managers, Sustain encourages each shared accommodation to have regular 'house meetings' (ideally chaired by tenants themselves and supported by the House manager). At these meetings, issues can be raised by tenants and discussions are encouraged concerning Sustain's operations insofar as they affect those tenancies.
- Ensuring 'customer feedback surveys are carried out at least annually (ie as part of the Inspection programme) and utilised to identify VfM KPI's
- Where tenancies need to change (eg the tenant is shown 'not to be fitting in') then they are offered a number of alternative accommodations elsewhere in the city for them to choose from. This alternative accommodation stay may be temporary or permanent (dependent upon circumstances) and will have been carefully considered so as to provide the best chance of managing any issues which caused their initial accommodation 'not to work'.
- Sustain also has a system of 'Tenancy Champions'. These are tenants who have been chosen by other tenants to be their representatives. Sustain will consult with these Tenant Champions whenever (eg due to time available) there is a need to identify whether any proposed policies or procedures are relevant and acceptable to tenants as a whole.
- Sustain has a system of positively encouraging Complaints –the Complaints Policy & Procedure. The system ensures that Tenants are able to raise a complaint without any fear of retribution, have the complaint investigated within set timescales and be consulted on the complaint intended outcome and ongoing/corrective action.

Sustain's Board regards Tenant Engagement and supporting vulnerable adults as a key focus, to this end it has established a Tenant Engagement Committee now called then Tenant Engagement and Empowerment Committee to focus on Tenant Engagement, Complaints, Value for Money reporting and General engagement processes and compliance. The Committee monitors and reviews activity and makes suggestions to Board on compliance, Risks and strategic activity relating to Tenant Engagement. This Committee has met 4 times in 2022 and 2023, and has helped drive a tenant centric and you said we have done culture to Sustain's activities

We listen to Tenants and deal with their concerns as evidence by speedy resolution and reporting on issues and complaints, good complaints and safeguarding processes, and acting upon what you have asked for with the

food banks initiative, setting up things for you to do with the Colleges, the DWP, move on support, and links to Community activities.

- The Board of Sustain reviews Sustain's compliance with Regulatory Standards, and reports this in Sustain's Annual report and Value for Money Statements- including any areas of non-compliance.
- Sustain is part of the Complaints Ombudsman scheme and reports on its compliance with this scheme annually
- Sustain operates in the Birmingham City Council area and participates and engages at all times with BCC inspections and initiatives relating to tenants. Sustain is an active member of the SEAQ scheme and has been awarded silver provisional
- Since 2022 with the launch of an active Tenant Engagement Strategy monitored by the Board through the TEEC. This has included Regular tenant Surveys, the Establishment of a Tenant Forum which has met 4 times, publishing and a Tenant Newsletter. We have developed a new tenant Centred web page for tenants to access news and key relevant information.
- A full Annual report on the Strategy will be considered by Board and published on Sustain's web page and returned to the RSH by June each year starting in 2024, this will include RSH Reporting on Complaints, Health & Safety Compliance and Results Tenant Perception Surveys
- We have reported to tenants in February 2024 – see highlights below

# **Highlights of Tenant Engagement Strategy – ‘Involvement & Empowerment’ 2023**

Sustain believes very strongly that its tenants (and any other service users) should have the widest possible say in the services they receive, on the basis of the service reflecting their needs and aspirations and providing a safe living environment. Highlights from 2023 to date are;

## **For You - Sustain Working With Partners**

- **Helping Home Providers provide quality and 100% safe accommodation and relevant support to you, including anti mold initiatives**
- **Silver Graded within Birmingham Q Mark, and intensively working with Local Inspections**
- **Faster and Better DWP Claims Processing**
- **Working with Key Providers of support services to you, Birmingham City Council, NHS, and local voluntary groups**
- **Working with the Complaints Ombudsman and Regulator for Social Housing to improve services for you**

## **From You - Tenant Voice and input**

- **4 Tenant Forums – with a You Say we Do Format**
- **From this we have provided things to do - Foodbanks, Education & Welfare options**
- **From this we have provided greater quality in Support Services which are transferable**
- **From this we have developed new ways to communicate to you – new web page to go live shortly**
- **Two Tenant Newsletters have been published**
- **Quarterly Tenant Satisfaction Surveys - 100% of Tenants given the opportunity to respond - over 90% satisfaction – full Report to be published after 31st March**
- **Issues and complaints processes for tenants have delivered speedy resolutions**
- **Home Notice Boards Updated – including with your rights to complain and charter of rights**
- **Tenant Issues and Interest at heart of decisions and strategies – Tenant Engagement and Empowerment Committee informing our Board.**

## **2. Existing RSH requirements and Sustain provision**

Sustain is committed to full reporting and compliance with Regulatory Standards relating to Value for Money, Viability, Governance and Consumer and Tenancy standards.

Sustain is committed to full reporting and compliance with The Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code and 'Standards'

Other ways in which Sustain is looking to develop new opportunities for tenant's further involvement include: -

- Improving the quality and volume of relevant information provided to tenants, so that they are able to be more effectively involved in the provision of their accommodation and support.
- Understanding and responding to diverse needs.
- Developing and delivering tailored solutions to understanding Sustain's tenant cohort needs through innovative survey techniques, tenant support, tenant engagement, tenant assessment of needs services

Sustain intends to map and update all its compliance processes against the RSH Standards and BCC Q Mark standards to ensure we meet all our standards for tenants as part of the 2024 Governance and Compliance Action Plan to be adopted Board in March 2024, this will be reported annually within the Annual Report. Full guidance on the RSH Standard is being issued in spring 2023 and will be mapped in time for Annual report Production in June 2023

Sustain will continue to develop and provide for Tenant Engagement processes and services to allow it to be fully compliant with changes in Consumer Standards that the RSH requires reporting upon from April 2024, this to be reviewed Annually. This includes; providing for Tenant Satisfaction and complaints survey systems across survey themes to be conducted quarterly. This delivery includes quarterly complaints/H & S/and Tenant surveys and reported upon on each quarter. Continued quarterly Tenant

Service Forums, Continued Complaints and Compliance Reporting each quarter to TEEC and Board systems, Mapping of Compliance, Running of Tenant Satisfaction surveys to allow for whole estate survey each year, report on Decent Homed and H and S metrics and prepare annual VFM Statement. Produce an Annual Report on the Strategy and publish on Sustain website with the Sustain Annual Report.

Sustain intends and makes plans to provide the Tenant Engagement processes and services to allow it to be fully compliant with changes in Consumer Standards/Tenant Facing Standards that the BCC is planning in 2024/25, this to be reviewed Annually. This includes Inspection regimes, Quality Schemes, and Registration Schemes.

Tenant Voice and input, Sustain to develop the tenant voice through developing quarterly surveys, complaints processes with meaningful results which can be feeds into managerial and strategic actions by Sustain. Sustain will provide Tenant engagement channels including Tenant Consultations on Tenancy and Tenant Service Forums to give tenants a direct voice on service issues, and is committed to Tenant Communication through referral, Tenant Support and Tenant Newsletters and Information notices. TEEC will in 2024 develop pathways for Tenants to directly participate in Board and Committee meetings through tenant stories and input groups to key initiatives.

We intend to continue Tenant Facing activities and have surveyed our tenants at forums on what they would like to see in 24/25. The Results are outlined below;

# **Tenant Engagement Strategy – ‘Delivering support to supportive services’ 2024**

Recognising Housing Provision Supply shortages and Welfare Reform – 2024 will see Sustain building you a range of services from Support to Supportive to enable your now needs and future aspirations

## **For You - Sustain Developing Supportive Networks for You ?**

### **Good Idea or not?**

- **Work with Birmingham partners to provide a single Quality & Support Plan Framework – to allow you access services and housing across the city quickly**
- **Work with the DWP, NHS and Birmingham City Council to provide more independent living accommodation supply**
- **Work with The Compliant Ombudsman to develop their accessible complaint IT platform so you can track complaints in**
- **Work With the Regulator to implement better Safety Standards in your home – the electrical safety standard**

## **From You - Tenant Voice and input**

- **6 Tenant Forums through the year – run as workshops on your Support Themes**
- **Provide more things for you to do - Foodbanks, Events, Education & Welfare options**
- **Keep developing new ways to communicate to you and for you to communicate to us – web pages, social media notifications**
- **Monthly Tenant Newsletters to keep you up to date**
- **Conduct Quarterly Tenant Satisfaction Surveys with a QR Code access**
- **Improved Home Notice Boards – not just paper but electronic display board**
- **Keep Tenant Issues and Interests at the heart of decisions and strategies – invite tenants to meet with the board and give us your story and issues directly**

Sustain intends to support NHF and National Standards Initiatives such as Tenants Together as and when they occur and meet Sustain’s Strategic Aims.

### **3.**

#### **4. Reporting to be made under the Strategy**

The Tenant Engagement & Empowerment Committee shall receive quarterly and Annually the following reporting as follows; Complaints Reporting, Value for Money reporting, Tenant Satisfaction Survey plans and results, BCC Q Mark Reporting, RSH Standards Compliance Reporting, and an Annual Report on the Strategy. The Committee will sign off on an annual report to be submitted to the RSH under the C Standard every June, this to include data on complaints, Health & Safety and tenant Satisfaction.

The Board of Sustain shall receive quarterly and annually the following reporting; Complaints Reporting, Value for Money reporting, Tenant Satisfaction Survey plans and results, BCC Q Mark Reporting, RSH Standards Compliance Reporting, and an Annual report on the Strategy. The Board will sign off on an annual report to be submitted to the RSH under the C Standard every June, this to include data on complaints, Health & Safety and tenant Satisfaction.

The Board and Tenant Engagement Committee shall reserve the right to seek additional reporting- such as benchmarking materials

Sustain is committed to making all Returns required to the RSH and BCC and will operate a 100% comply or explain process.

#### **5. Review and Oversight**

The Strategy should be reviewed and agreed by Board annually, with quarterly reporting and oversight to be carried out by the Tenant Engagement & Empowerment Committee.

#### **Associated Documents in Library**

- RSH Consumer Standards
- RSH Tenant Survey Results and Consumer Standards Plans
- BCC Q Mark Standards & NHF Tenants Together Standard
- Governance and Compliance Action Plan 2024/25